CLAIMS

What is claimed as new and desired to be protected by Letters Patent of the United States is:

1. A method for providing file contents comprising the steps of:

   transmitting, by a client node, a request for a file;

   receiving, by an access control server, a request for a file;

   making, by an access control server, an access control decision;

   determining a file type for the file;

   determining an identifier for an application program associated with the file type; and

   presenting the contents of the file to the client node.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein step (f) further comprises presenting, by an application server in an application server farm, the contents of the file to the client node.

3. The method of claim 1 further comprising determining, by a first application server in the application server farm, an application program associated with the file type.

4. The method of claim 3 further comprising presenting, by the first application server in the application server farm, the contents of the file to the client node.

5. The method of claim 3 further comprising presenting, by a second application server in the application server farm, the contents of the file to the client node.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein step (d) further comprises, determining, by an access control server, a file type for the file.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein step (d) further comprises, determining, by an application server in an application server farm, a file type for the file.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein step (e) further comprises determining, by an access control server, an identifier for an application program associated with the file type.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein step (e) further comprises determining, by an application server in an application server farm, an identifier for an application program associated with the file type.

10. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of acquiring, by the access control server, information about the client node.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein step (c) further comprises comparing the information acquired by the access control server to a policy to make the access control decision.

12. The method of claim 10 wherein step (f) further comprises using, by an application server, acquired information to select a format for the presentation of the file contents.

13. The method of claim 10 wherein step (f) further comprises presenting the contents of the file by applying a policy to the acquired information to select a format for presentation of the file contents.

14. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of transmitting, by the access control server, a collection agent to the client node.

15. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of acquiring, by the access control server, information about the client node using a collection agent.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein step (c) further comprises comparing the information acquired by the collection agent to a policy to make the access control decision.

17. The method of claim 1 wherein step (c) further comprises rejecting, by the access control server, the request.

18. The method of claim 1 wherein step (d) further comprises determining, by the access control server, the file type by extracting a file extension.

19. The method of claim 1 wherein step (e) further comprises determining, by an application server, the identifier of the application program by querying a database for the application program to use with a file extension.

20. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of retrieving the file from a file server.

21. The method of claim 20 further comprising the step of retrieving, by an application server, the file from a file server.

22. The method of claim 20 further comprising the step of retrieving, by an access control server, the file from a file server.

23. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of retrieving the file from a web server.

24. The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of retrieving, by an application server, the file from a web server.

25. The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of retrieving, by an access control server, the file from a web server.

26. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of retrieving the file from an email server.

27. The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of retrieving, by an application server, the file from an email server.

28. The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of retrieving, by an access control server, the file from an email server.

29. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of connecting, by the client node, to an application server.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein step (f) further comprises presenting the contents of the file to the client node over the connection.

31. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of transmitting, by an access control server, an executable file to the client node.

32. The method of claim 31 further comprising identifying, by the executable file, the application server opening the file for the client node.

33. The method of claim 1 wherein step (a) further comprises the client node residing on a first network separated from a second network by a network boundary, the client node requesting a file from an access control server, residing on the second network.

34. The method of claim 27 wherein step (d) further comprises the access control server downloading the file from a content server.

35. A system for providing file contents comprising:
a client node requesting a file;
an access control server receiving the request for the file and making an access control decision; and
an application server presenting the file contents to the client node using an application program associated with a file type for the requested file.

36. The system of claim 35 wherein the application server further comprises identifying the application program associated with the file type.

37. The system of claim 35 wherein the access control server further comprises identifying the application program associated with the file type.

38. The system of claim 35 wherein the access control server further comprises a database storing at least one policy.

39. The system of claim 35 wherein the access control server further comprises a collection agent acquiring information about the client node.

40. The system of claim 39 wherein the access control server further comprises making an access control decision based on the information acquired by the collection agent.

41. The system of claim 39 wherein the access control server further comprises making an access control decision by applying a policy to the information acquired by the collection agent.

42. The system of claim 39 wherein the collection agent acquires information about the client node regarding device type.

43. The system of claim 39 wherein the collection agent acquires information about the client node regarding network connection information.

44. The system of claim 39 wherein the collection agent acquires information about the client node regarding authorization credentials.

45. The system of claim 35 wherein the application server includes a database containing at least one application program associated with at least one file type.

46. The system of claim 45 wherein the application server further comprises determining an identifier for an application program by querying the database.

47. The system from claim 35 wherein the access control server transmits an executable file to the client node.

48. The system from claim 47 wherein the executable file includes an identifier for the application program associated with the file.

49. The system from claim 47 wherein the executable file identifies an application server.

50. The system from claim 47 wherein the client node makes a connection to the application server identified by the executable file.

51. The system from claim 47 wherein the application server accepts a connection from the client node.

52. The system from claim 47 wherein the client node transmits the identifier for the application program identified by the executable file to the application server.

53. The system from claim 47 wherein the application server presents the file contents over the connection to the client node.